

# QUARTERLY UPDATE

Office of Criminal Justice and  
Behavioral Health Initiatives  
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## WHY THE OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INITIATIVES?

**Increased Crime? Increased Need? Increased Action!**

Criminal behavior continues to plague our streets and neighborhoods in Bernalillo County. In 2021, Albuquerque recorded 117 homicides — a 46% increase over 2020. The significant rise in homicides and other violent crimes in 2021 mirrors an unsettling national trend that began before and has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simultaneously, Bernalillo County is experiencing a tidal wave of need for housing, behavioral health services, and treatment for individuals with a substance use disorder. In New Mexico, 766 people - the highest number ever recorded - died from drug overdoses in 2021, and more than 80% of the homicides in New Mexico are drug-related.

While not all acts of violence can be attributed to unmet behavioral health needs of individuals causing harm in our community, it is imperative for Bernalillo County to enhance its approach to these persistent

challenges by recognizing and acting within the intersection of the local criminal justice and behavioral health systems.

Bernalillo County is leaning into this challenge. The solutions to increased crime and increased behavioral health needs are multifaceted and complex. They require meaningful collaboration among community partners, law enforcement and other criminal justice stakeholders, city/county/state leadership and relevant agencies, and local community-based service providers. This social problem can only be solved with a commitment of all government agencies, healthcare and social service providers, and the entire community of stakeholders.

To sharpen our focus and coordinate resources at the nexus where criminal justice and behavioral systems meet, Bernalillo County has a new office, *Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Initiatives* (CJBHI).

The CJBHI will help design, advance, and monitor programmatic responses aimed at the intersection space. The office represents the county's critical non law-enforcement response to help reduce crime, lower recidivism, and improve outcomes for those needing treatment and support for behavioral health disorders.

The CJBHI will seek ways to expand and enhance current programming by making data-informed and integrated decisions that will aid the implementation of new programming and coordination efforts.

The City has also developed The Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS), an alternative response program to address concerns called into the 911 system. CJBHI will work with ACS to address the criminal justice and behavioral health needs our communities are facing as we seek to swiftly and decisively address this problem.

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

## Transforming Justice

Many residents recall the not-too-distant past when the county jail, or Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC), experienced a prolonged period of overcrowding and substandard safety and security conditions for staff and inmates. Bernalillo County is still working toward meeting requirements brought by a federal lawsuit around conditions at the jail and has made significant strides to address deficiencies and improve compliance. In particular, the county - in collaboration with other criminal justice partners - has found ways to improve aspects of judicial operations by implementing new programs and revising policies that have had the combined result of significantly reducing dangerous and costly overcrowding at the jail.

Along the way, the county and its partners have learned about and applied criminal justice reforms and best practices that other communities around the country are exploring. This is part of how our community is *transforming justice* to institute a fair, efficient and effective criminal justice system. Bernalillo County residents deserve a justice system that works for all of us by holding violent criminals accountable, aiding victims, and helping meet the needs of vulnerable residents and families.



## Supporting Programs That Work

Bernalillo County, in addition to law enforcement and other public safety efforts, also makes important and effective investments into the local criminal justice system through partnerships with entities like the District Attorney's Office, the Law Offices of the Public Defender, and the Metropolitan and District Courts. Below is a brief listing of programs and initiatives the county supports. Look ahead to future CJBHI newsletters to feature more highlights of these programs.

- The Felony DWI Specialty Court Program in District Court
- Pre-Prosecution Diversion Program in the DA's Office
- Forensic Case Management/Navigation Program in Metropolitan Court
- Felony Mental Health and Young Adult Specialty Court Programs in District Court
- Felony Probation Violation Program
- Felony Pretrial Supervision and its associated GPS monitoring program.

## Commitment to Collaboration

Like many social systems in America, the set of practices, policies, programs, and organizations required to operate a local criminal justice system is quite complex and consumes significant amounts of public resources to administer. Not all parts of the system work ideally. Unfortunately, many individuals are not always served by the system fairly or equally.

Solutions for fixing all or part of our criminal justice system are not found easily. There is no silver bullet. Many communities like ours are finding that the most effective tool for addressing complex system issues is for involved partners to work collaboratively. In Bernalillo County, stakeholders are engaged through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council ([CJCC](#)) in search of common-ground solutions that work. Future CJBHI newsletters will highlight more of the work of this body.

# Behavioral Health Initiatives

## Looking Ahead

The City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County recently conducted a gap analysis on current and needed services for behavioral health and housing. View the Gap Analysis Report and the addendum to the gap analysis [here](#). The work of the assessment included convening community partners and city stakeholders across Albuquerque, surveying residents to learn more about the key issues facing the health and safety of Albuquerque's communities, and synthesizing these survey findings to shape the six themes of the assessment. In order to foster community input, two forums for community providers and community members were held to gather feedback on current work and what is needed to improve services for those in need. Now the city, county, and state partners are collaborating to develop a joint strategic plan to direct the development of services and support of our community over the next two years.

## School-Based Health Centers

The University of New Mexico is working with CJBHI to operate two mobile school-based health centers (SBHCs) that will provide preventative, behavioral health, and primary care services to youth in Albuquerque schools. The units will operate on a rotating schedule to allow them to visit a variety of elementary, middle, and high schools each month. Mobile SBHCs are a combined priority for CJBHI and ABC Community Schools as they provide comprehensive care to underserved communities who lack access to consistent sources of high-quality health care.



## Behavioral Health Climate Surveys

CJBHI staff have been working with state Rep. Meredith Dixon's office to get a 100% response rate from residents and providers in a community survey that will be used to help shape future legislative priorities and to get a better idea of the behavioral health climate in the county. The surveys were distributed digitally and in print copies at key community locations to encourage participation, especially among those with lived-experience in behavioral health.



Rep. Meredith Dixon

## Client Spotlight

Crossroads for Women is a nonprofit organization that provides housing and therapeutic services to empower New Mexico women emerging from incarceration. It was awarded funding from the Behavioral Health Initiative in 2019 to provide Peer Case Management services to women with chronic behavioral health conditions and substance use disorders who have completed the internal housing program.

In December 2021, peer case management project staff assisted a client who had been searching for a two-bedroom unit for herself, her son, and her son's support animal. She was consistently being denied housing by property owners because of the support animal.

During her search for housing, the client was living in her car and staying in motels. Crossroads was able to provide a two-night motel voucher and support from Bold Futures, an organization that leads in policy change, research, place-based organizing, and culture shift by and for women and people of color in New Mexico. Crossroads staff connected the client with a property manager who did not have an issue with the support animal and was happy to rent to the client. The client was able to obtain housing under Section 8 and applied for assistance for the deposit.

This story of success is one of many that each of the BHI providers are impacting and changing lives to promote overall health and wellness.





## Single Site Supportive Housing

Bernalillo County, in partnership with Hope Village, Monarch, and YES Housing, worked diligently to open Hope Works, a 42-bed, single-site housing project for individuals and families who are chronically homeless. It is located at 1215 3rd St NW.

"Single site" refers to a best practice model where clients have access to all the supports they need (i.e., mental/behavioral health, medical care, basic needs) where they live. Hope Works is the first of its kind in New Mexico.

The entire building was architecturally designed to incorporate trauma-informed care into each living and common area. Each unit is 405 square feet, has one bedroom, and is ADA accessible with trauma-informed features. There is 24/7 security on site, as well as 24/7 Hope Works staff, who have been trained in de-escalation and crisis intervention. Clients may remain residents indefinitely or may choose to leave independently. Building access is restricted to staff and residents only.



## This Month At A Glance

The Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI) is a significant step forward in local efforts to address and prevent the mental health, substance abuse, addiction, and homelessness crisis in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and the middle Rio Grande region of New Mexico. The BHI has allocated \$21,740,511 of recurring dollars and \$62,940,827 of one-time dollars. Funding is awarded to more than 30 providers in 11 service areas. Service areas and number of clients served are summarized below.

<u>Program Name</u>	<u>Total Clients Served for the month (Duplicated)</u>	<u>Service Hours/ Units</u>	<u>Numbers served YTD (Duplicated)</u>	<u>Numbers Served Total (Duplicated)</u>	<u>Evaluation Status</u>
ACES-NEW	478	647	2,653	2,653	NEW
YTLS	55	128	381	2528	6/21
CCSH	205	533	1482	6299	TBD
Peer Drop In	114	672	114	4,236	9/21
Peer Case Management	161	369	161	6,191	6/21
Community Engagement Teams	21	196	158	158	NEW
Suicide Prevention	458	132	3,062	17,915	3/3/2022



In September 2021, Bernalillo County's BHI solicited proposals for Senior Peer Case Management Services. The Albuquerque Center for Hope and Recovery (ACHR) submitted a proposal and was awarded \$563,164.00 for a two-year contract to provide peer support services to improve behavioral health services among individuals aged 65 years and older in Bernalillo County.



ACHR will provide strength-based case management services in a recovery oriented, person-first service that is culturally and linguistically appropriate. Case management services will determine acute needs, crisis intervention, care coordination, relevant referrals for unmet needs, and treatment plans to clients. The goal is to support clients' overall health, wellbeing, and quality of life. These clients suffer from mental health, substance abuse challenges, and/or life barriers and limitations brought on by aging, the COVID-19 pandemic and other disparities.

ACHR Executive Director Maxine Henry, MSW/MBA, is honored to do this work and excited to have more opportunities to work with the BHI. In addition to this award, ACHR was also awarded BHI funding for Peer Drop-In Services in 2018 and is in the last contract year of that agreement. This targeted service is new to the BHI and is an expansion of the continuum of care, which seeks to provide services across a lifespan for Bernalillo County residents in need.